NO

NORMAL

WORK

THESIS

LIFE

PROJECT

PRIDE

DURING

GENOCIDE

Tyrion Lannister: The powerful have always preyed on the powerless, that's how they became powerful in the first place.

Varys: Perhaps. And perhaps we've grown so used to horror, we assume there's no other way.

Overview

I wanted my thesis project to reflect my beliefs about art, care, and the role of the artist in contemporary society.

I began developing a local based, participative project in collaboration with an association for advocacy and awareness about ADHD, tailored for diagnosed and undiagnosed people, to help their sense of identity break free of stereotypes, transforming labels into tools and not cages – as I was able to do for myself, by luck and effort throughout my life.

The more I reflected on the themes of care, coherence, and embracing one's potential regardless of external dogmas, I came to realize that I was behaving quite the opposite of what I was hoping to achieve through my project. My position was of moral superiority, even if in good faith; in the meanwhile, I was not really using my labels as tools, I was just ignoring my self-actualization needs.

I was and still am being impacted deeply by local and global news, specifically the daily livestreaming of massacres and dehumanizing treatment of Palestinians. After more than a year of measurable clinical issues no health professional was able to pinpoint the root cause of, this summer, some weeks before I enrolled for the thesis exam, I had decided to take concrete action about the Palestinian Genocide, not just attending silently a weekly protest. I was suddenly able to work tirelessly day and night, all days of the week; to take part in protests and organize them; to carry loudspeakers for hours and coordinate people efficiently; to discuss productively with strangers who shared my goals and who didn't.

When symptoms decreased and even disappeared, I had to admit to myself that I physically needed that kind of effective, consequential output for my stress; a series of workshops engineered for comfort and self-expression, like the ones I planned for my thesis project, wouldn't even compare. How could I keep offering to others that inconsequential, almost performative approach, and feel proud of my work?

I decided to accept the incoherences that limited my initial idea, and to present an artwork that truly embodies my beliefs about art, care, and the role of the artist in contemporary society. I am presenting the dissonance between the project I had initially planned, but I realized lacked in authenticity, and what I felt compelled to apply my time and effort to during the standard 14 weeks of thesis elaboration. It takes the form of a physical Archive of all

the reasons I could not carry on like nothing was happening: a testimony on how my mind, labelled as ADHD, was not disabled at all when it was a matter of acting in line with my beliefs; a documentation of what I have seen through screens and with my own eyes, of texts I've read and contributed to write, and more; overall, an artwork that has the humble aim to help the Palestinian cause by unapologetically reclaiming the political role of art.

Table of contents

3 State of the art, state of the Art,and 'art' of the status quo
4 Art vs Industry
5 Industry vs Humanity
7 Neurodivergence in modern society
9 The so-called attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder
10 Neurodivergence and stress
11 The Care Industry and neurodivergence
12 The Original ~~Sin~~ Worry:
why the 'West' is intrinsically stressed
14 Political nuance? more like incoherence
15 Palestine and the globalization of trauma
17 The initial project
22 The final project
23 How the project changing stays the same
25 My stance
26 Timeline of events
31 Thanks and acknowledgements
34 Bibliography & References

State of the art, state of the Art, and 'art' of the status quo

Art is any human craft that embeds care and purpose in the creation process; any so-called art that does not involve intention, care, skill, time and the involvement of the artist is no art at all.

During these past four months I've come to theorize that any artistic production consists in a personal re-elaboration of external inputs through a curated framework in order to create any form of intentional communication (image, text, audio, clothing, multisensorial experience…) that can reflect society back at itself through individuals experiencing art, across space and time. Some art is meant to be perceived while it's produced, or maybe only years later, by chance; by a worldwide audience or by few selected individuals; carrying hyperclear messages or nuanced suggestions; but always art needs to be perceived and while being perceived there needs to be awareness of its intentionality[1, pp. 11–12].

The Mona Lisa has always been presented to me as art, the Renaissance Villas and their gardens are surely art, the costumes for acclaimed theatrical performances – undoubtedly art… The ancient decorated daily tools we have unearthed in archaeological sites are art, a homeschooled kid frustrated attempts at embroidery are art – different kind from a pearl encrusted shawl of a princess, but still art. From my definition above, you can see that I have grown to decolonialize the concept of Art I held as something of the cultured, for the rich. A poster for a soirée by Alphonse Mucha is art, one by a less known colleague is still art; and the leaflet a little girl made for her play-pretend of grownups entertainment, that only some lucky humans got to see before it was lost, is definitely art, too. A beautiful sunset is not art; the picture, or the painting, or the poem, that the artist decides to create of it is art, as long as there is intention to communicate something through the artwork and someone can receive it.

What is the modern equivalent of decorated daily utilities, what will be on display in historical museums centuries from now? And why is it *not* designer stationery, nor decorated dishes? It's obviously not a matter of aesthetics. The reason most of what we fill our lives with won't be other than waste and rubble in some years is a very simple one: it is mass produced. So we can say that the Alfa Romeo Disco Volante is for sure art in the aspect of its iconic project, its distinctive aesthetics – but not in its replicability[2]. The designer products of any multinational furniture company have value as expression

of human ingenuity and *zeitgeist* in style, but until there will be just a handful left in the world, a specimen of designer chair won't be as meaningful in representing human art as its project will be.

Art vs Industry

I believe that the semantic definition of Art is in complete antithesis with the one of modern industry: where serialization for profit begins, that's where Art ends. As soon as a part of the creation process is automated, people lose the ability to pour intention and care in its creation. A specialized woodworker technician who works in a chair assembly line puts way more attention to the machine relieving them of the physical effort, than towards the chairs themselves.

Carefully crafted poetry differs not from the carefully crafted text of a law; both reflect the language of their time for their I believe that the semantic definition of Art is in complete antithesis with the one of modern industry: where serialization for profit begins, that's where Art ends. As soon as a part of the creation process is automated, people lose the ability to pour intention and care in its creation. A specialized woodworker technician who works in a chair assembly line puts way more attention to the machine relieving them of the physical effort, than towards the chairs themselves.

Carefully crafted poetry differs not from the carefully crafted text of a law; both reflect the language of their time for their intended audience, and try to cater through words for a human need that the Author felt impellent. Bad poetry, meaning anything written with mainly serialization and profit in mind, is unworthy of representing human artistry as much as bad law-making, written with personal gain and carelessness for its consequences. A skilfully executed caricature portrait sketched by a busker in the streets of an historical city is not different from a skilfully executed selfie: different communicative standards for each, different targets, different half-life, and yet still an aesthetic endeavour carried on with earnest communicative intention. A busker sketching portraits on the streets without placing any care in them is as unartistic as a social media picture post made only for the habit of artificially induced dopamine, without further aim. Both may earn their author some money, or they may not; I am not discussing the economic purpose itself, just the amount of care and communicative intent present while the artwork is being crafted.

It is not even a matter of audience size: a worldwide advertisement campaign curated by a photographer firm has the same reach, in numbers, of any sharpie-on-cardboard banner for a protest in

which one of the attendees has a social media following. An advertisement campaign made with stock photos and no care in presenting them well has near to no artistic value; a school desk with layers of tags and obscene drawings, never making it to the news but seen just by its classroom pupils, is Art as much as the Lascaux cave paintings.

We have been conditioned to think way differently. More and more in recent times art as a normal human practice has been commodified, reduced as a tool for the individual to soothe the pain and fulfil the needs that are caused from being, almost always unknowingly, immersed in any growth-centred environment[3, Para. 26]. Graffiti on the walls are urban decay; owning an overpriced mass-produced kitchen accessory is a sign of wealth and refinement. Self-expression is strongly policed and restricted. The social value of a clean wall, a clean desk, a clean look is paramount.

Art is actively confined to the past, the rich, or sometimes the weird, that ought to get rich before they die and become a thing of the past. Common people have been separated from their artistic potential by theft of time, spent participating in the fast-paced economy, contributing to the frantic society, upholding the belief that Art is not a spontaneous product of human life. The concept of 'classical art' (as any other west-centric definition of art) is in truth strongly limited by the socioeconomic system in place that keeps the human being alienated from the natural world, alienated from the society it's a part of, body severed from mind, intention disconnected from action[4].

Industry vs Humanity

Industrialization has its functional reason to exist in relieving the worker of the yoke of hard labour: in this sense, any technological advancement is a wonderful expression of human ingenuity, but this is not the aspect of industrialization that has been prevalent in the last two centuries. The rise of the machines in the productive sector of economy has been completely subservient to a logic that sees profit as the only true aim. This logic has progressively seeped into all our lives, and is slowly but steadily being normalized, from life-saving drugs with revoltingly high margins of profit to the 'rise of the cost of living', people are used to assign monetary value to invaluable things, totally resigned to having to pay dearly for the luxury of physical and mental laziness. Easy examples of technology enslaving humanity instead of being a fabulous tool for progress and growth come from the digital world: the negative effects of smartphone overuse on

the human brain[5], the process of *enshittifcation* taking place in the global environment of the web[6], the undetectable rise of invasive surveillance[7].

At the intersection between art and technological progress being distorted and ruined by the capitalistic overtaking of industry, are those digital and analogic objects 'created' through the use of generative TTI (text-to-image) algorithms. Alas, "AI art" is a label that's intentionally misleading, more properly a true paradox: the negation of the artistic process, unrelated to the fact that software is involved, normalizes the complete removal of the artistic act of making subsequent choices to shape the artwork, as a way to carry a message[8]. It is not a coincidence that in the years before the AI craze, the road towards it was paved by months of artificially inflated hype for NFTs: both are unquestionable sign of how much art has already been *industrialized*[9].

Industrialization as a killer of humanity is not a process limited to the artistic expression of people: many other parts of the authentic human experience of life have been suffering this process, exponentially so in the last decades.

The Art Industry's most comforting branch, the Entertainment Industry, keeps producing content that's extremely palliative and effectively manipulative (alternatively sedating and nurturing, sometimes concurrently, depending on the device and the channel, the content-consuming experience tailored up to the single individual with algorithm-driven platforms), even if the true roots of entertainment are catharsis and collective processing.

The Sports Industry has only the appearance of sport, but does not revolve around enjoying playing by convened rules while moving the body and feeling good about it; on the contrary it is progressively abandoning the illusion that is not a catalyst for violence, and a distraction from other issues where those high-energy emotional outbursts would bring some change.

Environmentalism has also given way to its industrialized declension, mother of greenwashing and 'green options' for receipts printing in fast fashion stores, reduced to gardening in the backyard of socioeconomic collapse.

The Conflict Industry had to make little to no effort for turning the quarrels *over* profit in quarrels *for* profit. Now the 'war effort' is focused on prolonging and managing active conflicts, not in winning them. Winning brings to a halt the weapon supply chain.

How many millions will the investors lose with peace[10][11]?

Once one knows where to look, examples like these will start to appear in every corner. A socioeconomic system that values mindless growth, once big and widespread enough – as it is now, is bound to engulf, assimilate and distort any part of human life that, if left developing organically, would antagonize its mindless, disconnected, inhuman aspects.

One of the most effective remedies to carelessness is humans' innate predisposition for prosocial behaviour, the ability to interact with one another in a perspective of collaboration and being able to care for others[12]. Unsurprisingly, this aspect of humanity, too, has been largely taken over by capitalist industrialism. The Industry of Care keeps focusing on ineffective self-care at worst, individual-level scientific medical care at best – not really nurturing the Collective through the Individual but keeping the individual oblivious of the path towards true wellbeing. Modern mental health care systems, even if inadvertently[13], have the aim of fracturing issues until they're just heavy enough to be bearable (with the right amount of support and medications), but distorted enough to appear fundamentally unsolvable; yet *true care* should act at the root of anything that makes care necessary[14]. Any care that does not aim to solve the ailment at the source is just *palliative*[15].

Neurodivergence in modern society

Neurodiversity is not a diagnosis, nor a trend: it is a paradigm, postulating that a list of conditions (namely, at the time of writing: autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), developmental speech disorders, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysnomia, intellectual disability, obsessive–compulsive disorder (OCD), schizophrenia, and Tourette syndrome) are simply an expression of individual variance in sensory processing, motor abilities, social comfort, cognition, and focus[16]. Under this paradigm, these conditions are considered diversities, not afflictions of an otherwise healthy nervous system, hence should not be treated but simply accommodated for.

Neurodivergent people present to the world a mental framework that differs from the median, the average, the so-called normal (a 'norm' that is never defined in any medical treatise). The main presentation of any neurodivergence is threefold: it manifests in the relations of the individual with themselves, with other individuals, and with the world at large. The main cause of stress is the constant

friction between the individual and an environment that is hostile in structure to their internal system, at every turn[17][18].

One classic example of accommodation for physically disabled people benefitting every individual interacting with the environment is the installation of sidewalk ramps after a great number of amputees came back to the U.S.A. during the Vietnam war; only after the ramps were done it occurred to the general public that such a small surface change made the landscape easier to walk through for everyone.

To better understand the situation of neurodivergent people (I'm going to focus mainly on ADHD and autism here, but the mental toll is comparable, at least in structure, for all the other conditions mentioned above), imagine now the same concept, but the amputees have no limb missing, no blunt force trauma, and all they know is wrong about themselves has been learned from the people around them being bothered by their behaviour. When and if they are able to shear away the layers of failure and self-pity without tearing themselves apart in the process, they look at their environment and the 'hostile edge of sidewalks' is not something so easily named: it's both the cold lighting in offices and the piercing unshaded warm lightbulbs in restaurants; the idiocy of small talk and the burden of formalities; the many systemic injustices and the respect demanded for authority when authority does not respect people. Living a neurodivergent life is something akin to Lovecraftian horror: what is wrong for the protagonist of the story is both titanic and ineffable. Which veterans' association will be able to convince which City Council to cater to these needs, that would mean changing the structure of the system itself?

Beside metaphor and literary references, a neurodivergent person is not inherently inept at living[19][20]; they just carry a heavier burden due to interacting with a world that is sharply in contrast with their needs. Not only concrete, well-definable needs like having the freedom to stim (self-soothe with repetitive controlled motions, with or without interaction with specific objects, or tools designed for it) whenever and wherever; they also feel more strongly than the average the need for flexibility, for whimsy, for coherence, for safety and predictability – in short, the need for *a softer world*. This is the reason why neurodivergence symptoms (or better, *consequences*) within western society are inherently linked to minorities: living outside of the standards of gender, being racialized, belonging to any marginalized group, being a woman… makes one live through more stressful experiences of life, so that their *abnormal presentation* is way more intense than in people who are not part of

any minority – in addition to being perceived under a discriminating lens no matter what[21].

This is also one of the reasons why the systems of care for neurodivergent individuals always start with a phase of categorizing and labelling, but there is no box to check in the questionnaires about being queer, racialized, poor. Getting to put the person in a series of boxes is more efficient for the Care Industry , while naming things for what they *really* are would lay the foundations for *real care* through *real change*. Not enough consideration is given to the effect of this unhelpful 'care' process on the individuals already carrying the burden of their condition, often bringing more stigma than relief; and yet the increase in diagnoses is weaponized against the people looking for care, even if there are numerous reasons for it not to be considered a 'trend'[22].

The so-called attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder

(a label for minds that manage attention in non-standard ways[23][24])

Since my official ADHD diagnosis I have gained more theoretical insight and more specialized tools to deal with this heavy lack of concordance between what I need and "how the world has always been"[25, V. 2] ('tradition is just peer pressure from dead people'[26] is sadly not a widespread saying yet); it was not news to me at all that I was a bit *weirder* than the average person I interacted with. More recently, being diagnosed with autism was equally unshocking. The introspection that happened during the three decades before I sought any diagnosis has not been disproven by the clinical perspective, only improved. I had and still have clear in my mind the concepts that shape the core of the neurodivergent mind, from when I managed to understand myself on my own.

Outside of any pathologization, and aside from symptoms that depend on the environment way more than the individual, one can reduce ADHD to this simple core descriptor: the mind is strongly motivated by interest, and not by socially defined importance, nor reward or negative consequences. All the cardinal symptoms are just a expressions of this basic descriptor: inattentiveness is attention governed by different principles (misplacing keys, as well as forgetting to drink or eat, means something else is more interesting); hyperactivity, be it mental (overthinking, multitasking…) or physical (stimming, danger sports…), is just a way to entertain a bored mind[27].

Neurodivergence and stress

One basic concept that should be clear while making any observation about humans and human-related constructs is the following: *people are not separate from the world they inhabit, neither metaphorically not materially*. We tricked ourselves into believing that we are not the same as other animals, not the same as every other living being; we are Very Different and potentially Way Better. It is not true: humans have almost the same brain as our ancestors of 200 000 years ago[28], every new study shining a light on our Modern Human ailments shows that we are acting out of safe range for our biologic hardware[29][30][31].

In recent years the medical and social perspective on neurodivergence have been merged by Kimberly Kitzerow: understanding her work makes easy to see how immune system, systems of cellular repair, metabolism, nervous system activity and genetic regulation are all interlinked and influenced by biochemical consequences of stress. More precisely, her educational work of research and theory unification strongly suggest that any one of the neurodiverse diagnoses is in truth the result of the subsequent action of stressors (simplifying, negative external factors) on the human body-mind, physically altering DNA and biochemical pathways, one generation after the next. Some of the 'toggles' individuated by her work cannot be deactivated by any means within the individual; some others have room for improvement, but the fundamental difference between neurotypical and neurodivergent is the amount of 'locked toggles'[32].

Stress is then both a factor of the causes, a factor of the 'symptoms'/presentation, and the main product of those same consequences, often being one of the main components of the mental environment throughout all neurodivergents' lives. Biologically, stress makes cells accumulate damage or potential damage; stress makes the human body more susceptible to pathogens[33], affects the pain threshold[34] and is often one if not the main root of many neuropsychiatric ailments[35].

The Care Industry and neurodivergence

In Italy disabilities are formally recognized by law (n. 104/1994) with a percentage system that evaluates one's impairment in productivity or in their ability to live a meaningful life autonomously. 100% means a total lack of autonomy; physical disabilities caused by work accidents are subject to a different legislation; a score below 33% brings no disability status[36]. Another law (n.170/2010) regulates the support for individuals with learning disabilities within the education system, stating that didactics have to be tailored to diagnosed pupils' necessities[37]. A fairly recent legislative decree (n. 62/2024) brings some modifications to law 104/1994, mainly in the certification process and the benefits details, introducing the concept of 'disability' instead of the original wording (the terms 'handicap' and 'handicapped person' semantically reduced disability as a lack of function relative to non-disabled people)[38].

Still, if not in verbiage, the formal evaluation of disability in Italy and many other modern states is profoundly linked to the capitalist system. It aims to define and compensate monetarily the inconveniences of not being able to 'earn a living' of the person with a disability and their caregiver(s) forced to take time off work. Having a disability score lower than the cutoff, being "unable to live normally by less than a third", means no right to be supported; if your symptoms worsen, you will be eventually able to receive care. But it is already clear that with neurodiversities the symptoms are more precisely their external presentation, actively managed by the individual, often at a great cost. Many scientific studies highlight the mental and psychological impact of masking for most of their life for people with autism, and how is not the condition itself but their effort towards appearing normal to be directly correlated with suicide, attempt, and depression onset[39][40][41]. But since the effort of masking is not classifiable, its cost stays invisible to the Care Industry, and those who pay it daily are never given a score for monetary compensation.

From the beginning of life, through the developing of the conscious mind, stress is a part of everyone's life; physically disabled people still have to fight for recognition and accommodations; neurodivergent people are just *way more* concerned with stress management, more or less consciously, than the average person, without having any obviously visible reason for it – often adopting coping mechanisms of variable risk/result proportions[42][43].

Advocacy for neurodivergent people will keep having a reason to exist until *true care* addressing the root causes of their invisible and unmeasurable struggle is not the norm.

The Original ~~Sin~~ Worry: why the 'West' is intrinsically stressed

Solo il riflusso di un'economia capitalista
autofagocitante credo potrà rispondere
ad una delle più pressanti richieste dell'umanità:
poter vivere senza dover precocemente morire di paura.

Fabrizio De André (1984) [43]

What is the main cause of human stress, the root of the problem, the thing that, if *taken care* of, all people (and neurodivergent people the most) would rejoice? What's the origin of every "sidewalk step" of modern society? We can look for our answer by zooming out our point of view enough to smooth personal, generational and societal stress through the lenses of centuries and ages.

What can lead an individual to steal from their neighbour, and a nation to try to acquire strategic resources outside its borders, borders that were also created as a way to prevent neighbouring nations from doing the same? Wealth disparity. What fosters rebellion, be it a child against a parent, a people against a leader, a colony against their colonizers? Power imbalance. The reasons why someone would accrue wealth and power are many, but they all share a root in individualistic behaviour. More often than not, it means the Other is the antagonist: they could, or will, harm us, directly or indirectly, in the same way one's self-interest justifies harming others. But we have countless examples from all ages of human selflessness and altruism[45][46][47]. Where do these conflictual dynamics originate from?

In his book "Against the Grain"[48], James C. Scott (who, not unlike Kitzerow, considers his work as 'connecting the dots'), explores the rise of 'western' civilizations through the social structure of early human settlements in Mesopotamia. He starts from the archaeological truth: sedentism long precedes animal and plant domestication, and animal domestication associated with sedentism was happening four millennia earlier than the first signs of agriculture can be inferred

by hard data. Domesticating plants fundamentally changed the social structure of civilizations: stable encampments gave way to cities. Before agriculture, groups of people living together (linked by kinship, mostly), harvested seasonal fruits and hunted seasonal herds. Within this lifestyle there was an intrinsic need for different neural systems, each with a predisposition for different tasks. For a nomad in the Fertile Crescent having good spatial memory only for edible plants they had seen a year before would have been essential for their community; misplacing tools around camp, being clumsy, or easily distracted away from tasks that did not capture their interest would not have been so tragic. With the rise of agriculture, mass-producing cereals meant the need for a stable presence of workforce for growing them, processing them, building the infrastructure to store the grains and to cater to the basic needs of the large amount of people involved. In a walled city, with strict rules and harsh punishments, not faring well with authority and being easily bored of routine would quickly become a problem.

"Convincing" people to work for the owner of the fields (i.e. the ruler of the city) was achieved either through slavery (forced assimilation of smaller settlements) or through the first ever occurrence of propaganda (to retain the people already living in the city). The 'uncivilized' people – who kept living as everybody had done until then – were for the first time *branded* as The Other, the Wrong Lifestyle, inferior and at the same time to be feared; life in the city was *marketed* as safer and more convenient than any other option. By logic and archaeological proof, it wasn't; we just decided to trust the story told by the one side that left written trace in the layers of rubble under their cities, regularly destroyed and rebuilt, one war for dominance after the other.

Winning over uncertainty and the unknown, both integral part of living through the cycles of nature, by dominating the environment and enforcing a rigid order was one of the many possible strategies for achieving a better life; yet it wasn't the wisest one to bring to a paroxysmal exasperation, given its long-term consequences we are now living through. Domestication soon began to mean control over reproduction in general, and was applied not only to fire, plants, and animals but also to slaves, state subjects, and women in the patriarchal family. Diversity and weakness started to equate. The seeds of mass-production, mass-consumption, mass-media and all *mass-* logics that would develop in later centuries within the 'western' civilizations, later exported globally through the violence of colonizing 'inferior peoples', come from the granaries of those first cities.

Political nuance? more like incoherence

Skipping some seven millennia forward from the first cities in Mesopotamia, we arrive at the present. Neoliberalism has been for almost two centuries one of the most effective ways to justify the State at times subsidizing its subjects through welfare policies (when it benefits capitalistic dynamics), and at times refusing to do so (when it would harm profit). The term 'neoliberalism' itself was coined as a way to reject classical liberalism, guilty of developing too much affinity with socialist perspectives. Liberalism is considered the predominant ideology of modern history, due to its many declinations and its general association with the economic ideology of capitalism.

In the last decades the façade is starting to fall: the upholding of the concept of a benevolent side of capitalism was made possible only by a collective delusion maintained by the constant overexertion of the youngest part of the working class and the progressive disenfranchisement of those most aware of the true nature of the system. Luckily, the combination of social, economic, and biological factors seems to have brought a halt to the self-perpetuating illusion[49], but the process is still long and unpleasant, and the aftermath is going to be even worse.

All considered, one can say that the many complex problems we face now globally are the result of adopting one specific reaction to the uncertainty of natural life: becoming separate from it and antagonizing natural rhythms and fellow humans, over and over. Instead of focusing our efforts on solving the original stressor, we have fractured and multiplied it like in a broken nightmare mirror[50].

Palestine and the globalization of trauma

The Palestinian cause is not a cause
for Palestinians only, but a cause for
every revolutionary... as a cause of
the exploited and oppressed masses in our era.

Ghassan Kanafani

The Palestinian struggle for self-determination within the areas illegally occupied by Israel[51] has recently broken into the collective consciousness, exiting from the niche fields of studies of scholars, dedicated geopolitics nerds and fringe activists. In 77 years of illegal occupation there has never been a level of attention and activation like the one reached in the past few months[52][53].

How can it be that a hyper-localized situation resonate so strongly around the world? Simply put, it's because it has become increasingly obvious how interlinked it always has been with every sociopolitical issue, worldwide.

From the removed observation point developed earlier to inquire about the roots of stress, honest to data and free from any petty allegiances, we can see how the Palestinian Genocide is a magnifier of all sorts of trauma. Everything we told ourselves was just an issue of the ages long past keeps happening in Palestine, and the objective truth cannot be ignored anymore.

Sovereignity has been a central concept in modern political philosophies. One of the sharpest takes on the modern world states that "the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die"[54]: under this light, and trying to maintain that zoomed out point of view, we can say that the sovereignty of a government, however it came to be, resides in applying that life and death power over its subjects. The actions of Israel keep imposing its dominion over Palestinians with the same justifications we can find in other occurrences of forced dominance. Freedom of the individual is formally paramount, yet those who belong to a certain group of people have far less freedom, similarly to what happened in South Africa during the Apartheid.

In the case of neocolonialism (defined as control or domination by a *powerful* country over less *powerful* ones by the use of economic pressure, political suppression and cultural dominance[55]) the abovementioned definition of sovereignty assumes a more concrete

meaning: a Nation has control over who lives and who dies in another Nation. French neocolonialism might have been dealt a decisive blow by the progressive economic emancipation of sub-Saharan nations [56][57]; U.S.A. neocolonialism in the Philippines[58] might soon be brought to a stop amidst the general discontent of the population against their government[59]; colonial frameworks are being actively identified and dismantled globally. Conversely, everyone could bear witness to Israel's the disproportionate response to the concentration camp break known as the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation, zionist neocolonialism[60] has been exposed as pure old-style colonialism, carried out with modern tools. Through the decades, the constant upholding of zionist objectives with violent colonial methods has defied every UN resolution regarding Palestine (to name only a few: Resolution 194, 11 December 1948[61, pp. 22–25], Resolution 3236, 22 November 1974[62], Resolution 43/177, 15 December 1988[62, pp. 62–65, 66–68], and Resolution 58/292, 6 May 2004[63, p. 11]).

Indigenous people being forced away from their ancestral homes were stereotypically represented by the First People of Turtle Island being starved, hunted, and forcefully integrated by colonizers in America, from the early 16th century up until the last residential school in Canada closing in 1996[64]; now we know that Israel is enacting the exact same pattern[65], both in open violation of international law[66] and by creating 'lawful' premises to do so[67][68].

The constant manipulation of facts and truths to keep the general population unaware or at least confused about the events unfolding was the textbook denotation of Nazi-regime-level propaganda[69]; we see its updated version in the Hasbara, that has adapted to cater to innumerable targets, not last the online spaces[70]. Its methods, not unlike other propaganda strategies, can be summarized with: shifting the Overton Window[71], applying the so-called "firehose of falsehood" (no matter the discordance, it's the flooding that numbs people); repeating phrases and concepts until they are accepted as truth; reframing facts with emotional language; political gaslighting. By becoming aware of hasbara tactics, we can start to recognize the same patterns in other contexts, namely our own democracies.

Caring about Palestine means realizing the centrality of war in modern economies (its physical interaction with everyday life has been brought to public attention thanks to the concrete actions of dockworkers[72] among many other groups of people an individuals); opposing the normalization of using taxpayer money to subsidize indirectly, or directly fund, massacres abroad[73]; re-learning

the original meaning of 'institutional representatives' and how elected politicians should fulfil their roles by actually pursuing people's best interest, not just talking about it[74]; bearing testimony to the constant erosion of international institutions and law by broken truces, violated ceasefires, and ignored ICC arrest warrants[75]; and last but not least caring about Palestine means bearing witness to unfiltered, livestreamed real-life physical violence enacted by an occupying power onto an occupied people and all those who help them[76].

All of this and more, and the respective implications, amount to being constantly exposed to a very large amount of *stressors*.

The initial project

In the next pages can be seen the booklet I elaborated in partnership with Neurotribe[77] as a starting point for a self-discovery and self-acceptance path that would benefit people with ADHD, both diagnosed and undiagnosed, in their constant struggle with stress. It is a simple invitation to feel empowered by the knowledge of their neurodiversity instead of feeling limited and diminished by it. The language is direct and the phrases can speak to any age, while I made sure to avoid direct requests as to not trigger PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance/Persistent Drive for Autonomy). The layout is enriched by visualization of core concepts, and different examples for outputs are provided to manage expectations and ease task-related anxiety. The font used is Sylexiad[78], specifically developed by Dr. Robert Hillier to ease reading for dyslexic people. I had a German translation checked by a friend from Bolzano to involve local people from both linguistic sides.

Se non hai altri fogli a disposizione, disegna pure qui.
In che modo ti rappresenterai oggi? Lascia da parte le etichette di ieri!

"ADHD" è un'etichetta...
disegnamo il contenuto del nostro barattolo!

Questa non è arteterapia.

Non ho studiato per avere risposte alle domande altrui, né per suggerire soluzioni ai problemi di altre persone (già faccio fatica con i miei...)

Non basandosi su libri di psicologia o manuali di autoaiuto, né sugli scritti di persone molto più istruite di me in materia, questo progetto non aderisce a nessuna scuola di pensiero.

Questo non è un esperimento scientifico. Non è una raccolta di dati statistica, non farà parte di un software basato su un algoritmo. Con questo progetto non devo dimostrare niente, a nessuno.

È un progetto artistico che non voglio fare da sola. È anche la mia tesi di laurea, ma vorrei che questo aspetto fosse secondario per voi tanto quanto lo è per me.

Questa sono io che cerco di mettere a frutto una parte della mia vita affinché possa essere di aiuto ad altre persone.

Dopo questa introduzione,
possiamo cominciare.

Attention deficit
and hyperactivity
disorder / syndrome

cioè

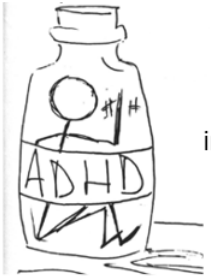
Sindrome / disordine
da carenza di attenzione
e iperattività

...è solo un'etichetta. Ed è pure vecchia.

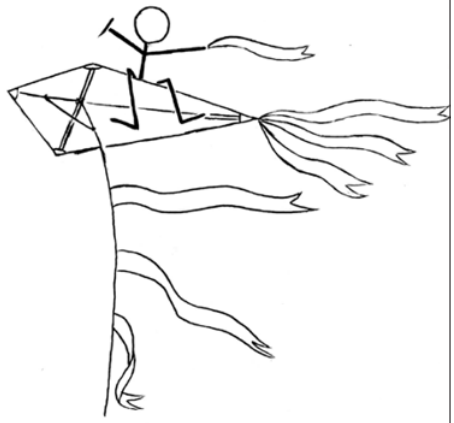
Quello che sappiamo oggi da studi scientifici* è che si tratta di una condizione in cui il cervello, per diverse cause in diversa misura in ciascun individuo, ha bisogno di più dopamina di quanta in effetti riesce ad usare. Questa condizione può esprimersi in diversi modi a seconda dei "metodi per farcela nonostante ciò" (in inglese *coping*) che si imparano, e che sono di volta in volta più efficaci.

Biologia (genetica / innata)
+
Crescita nel mondo (infanzia, società, stress...)
=
Mente di ogni individuo

Se *ogni individuo* è influenzato in maniera unica da una lunga e complessa serie di fattori, cosa ci spinge a usare questo tipo di etichette



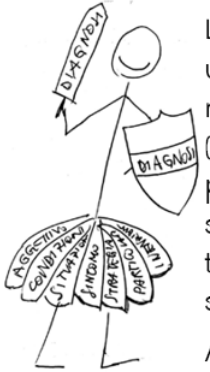
invece che queste?



È soprattutto per il tipo di società in cui viviamo.

È molto più semplice usare un'etichetta che incasella e semplifica invece di una serie di aggettivi e di frasi che cambiano a seconda delle situazioni, della stanchezza, dell'età...

Considerato tutto questo, credo che:

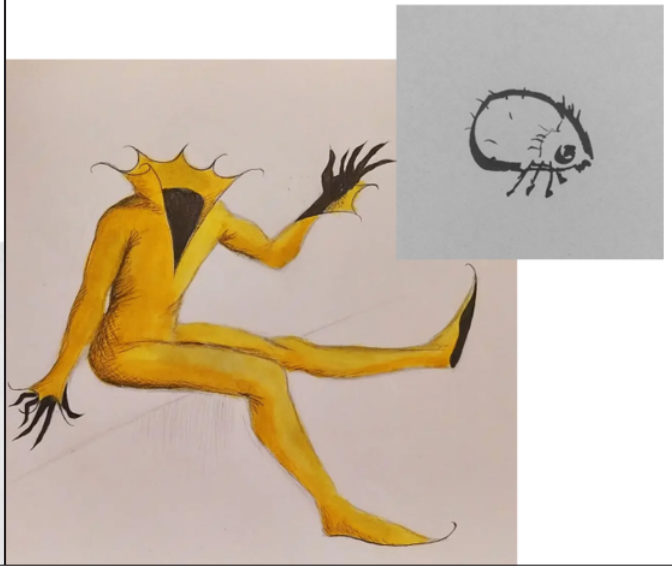


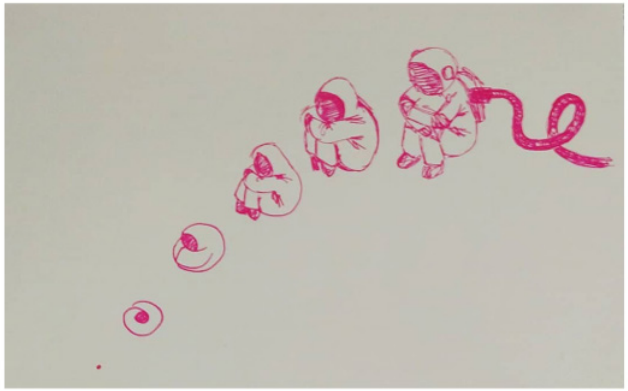
Le etichette sono il risultato di un'analisi che per sua stessa natura dev'essere standardizzata (anche se lentamente nel tempo può variare), e comportano una serie di benefici per l'interazione tra individuo e società, che vanno sfruttati per quanto possibile.

Al contrario le caratteristiche che sono adatte per descriverci non dipendono da null'altro che da noi stess3 e quando cambiano lo fanno con i nostri ritmi e sono a nostro esclusivo beneficio indipendentemente dalla società nel suo complesso.

E quando non troviamo le parole giuste?

Ho deciso di intraprendere il mio percorso diagnostico quando avevo 30 anni, dopo che molte cose mi erano successe e molte altre mi ero fatta succedere, e attraverso queste "mille vite" ho avuto la fortuna di trovare una fonte sicura di dopamina nel comprendermi nel passato e nel presente attraverso le lenti dell'esperienza. Tuttavia alle volte ero esausta, altre volte troppo felice per esprimere a parole quello che avevo capito di me... e così ho disegnato.





Questo è il mio invito per voi: lasciare da parte le parole, che possono trasformarsi in etichette con facilità, e raccontare le parti di voi che non rientrano nelle etichette con altri mezzi.

Se scegliete di usare le immagini, sarò in grado di seguirvi e incoraggiarvi, dato che è il mio modo preferito – e mi piacerebbe raccogliere tutti i vostri autoritratti in un libro, magari insieme a qualche piccola intervista o racconto, per guidare chi lo sfoglierà attraverso questo salto comunicativo.

Se le immagini non sono per nulla il vostro mezzo e volete lo stesso far parte di questo progetto, parliamone insieme.

Grazie di essere qui

Piera

* non ci stavano in questo libretto!

The final project

The role of the artist in the revolution is to look around and see what needs doing. Pick up a weapon like everyone else, run

Lola Olufemi

A shift happened when I could feel in my own body the benefits of putting myself on the line for the Palestinian Cause. It was not easy to accept at first, I think that my mind was somehow trying to shield itself from egoistic motivations. But as much as I was many times brought to tears by what I was witnessing with my own eyes through the camera lenses of Palestinian journalists and the smartphones of Palestinian civilians, I had to accept I was feeling relieved and energized by actively taking part in protests. It meant finding a meaningful use of my physical and mental energies: ADHD characteristics were not a negative symptom, but rather an amazing tool that let me complete task with ease. I was interacting with people that had noticed the similarities between the behaviour of the Israeli leadership and our own governments; I met with those who had been in this fight for decades, and understood their relief when after years and months the public opinion began to shift and managing the large number of people involved became a problem; I could see for myself that anyone, regardless of their previous life experiences, when presented with the objective truth had the need to see things change. Living coherently looks good on anyone.

I decided to embed that coherence in the final step of my academic path, a path that was undertaken by 13-years-ago me, too immersed in their own head to even bother understanding the concepts I presented in this documentation.

How the project changing stays the same

Neurodivergent people are still people, and I felt no discrimination toward my weirdness from those who like me believe that the struggle of Palestinians is the same struggle of all oppressed people in the world. Everyone's opinion is treasured, the common objective is clear, the expertise collected through the years is shared.

Being actively involved in any way or form for addressing the root of the problem, *taking care* of issues the proper way instead of just accepting them and trying to barely survive them, was the most effective form of care I had ever experienced. Being able to give an impromptu speech for a crowd of strangers – managing to explain *how the dots are connected* between the war industry, the rise of the altright to power and fears being artificially stoked to keep the status quo – was more fulfilling than any good grade I've ever managed to achieve in my life. Having signed the permit for the square in front of the University main entrance felt like a blessing when two highschool classes that travelled by train to be there could have a space to be political and a loudspeaker to read aloud their reflections.

In a sense, collectively *caring* for the injustices happening around the world, not for pity or superiority but because it's finally becoming clear how all humanity is interconnected, is in itself the antidote to passively accepting what is happening and burrowing deeper into isolation and self-care.

My original project saw me trying to cater to a group of people which I knew nothing about, except for their neurodivergent label; an endeavour that would have made my final work part of the current Care Industry. With it, I would have built a small, informal outlet which would have allowed those caught in a faulty system to feel some relief – and yet, I came to realise it would not have been *true care*.

I decided then to focus on the experience I had, navigating the hostile environment until I found a way to not feel completely hopeless about the future developments of society. I was not the key, *true care* was: so I began to collect all the evidence I could, not unlike my ever-growing pile of medical records.

Screenshots of violence and pain.

Texts and translations by people being wounded,
killed,
starved.

Opinions of survivors,
exiled Palestinians,
political scientists.

Leaflets I read over loudhailer,
thoughts that others had.

News of obvious descent into fascism.

And again, daily suffering and graphic images.

Permission slips to use public space.

Articles on blocked humanitarian aid.

My own written thoughts.

All what I've seen and done about Palestine.

My stance

I could not derive a lesson from these weeks. I could not offer a method to feel better. It has worked for me, up until now, but the situation is ongoing both in Palestine and in my mind. I don't know if other neurodivergent people could follow my steps and come closer to a proper form of care for their stressed-out selves. The most effective thing I can do is connect the dots. This is the reason why my final project is an archive and not just a single artistic output I crafted with care and intention out of the source material. My art is on display at protests, and no one has yet been able to bring a proper protest within the university halls.

The archive is printed in black and white with my own printer, since my university has decided that the 'free' in its name means also free from politics – and yet it keeps conflating human values, like solidarity and antifascism, with politics. It credits politicians for strongly willing to homage foreign anti-nazi student collectives from the past with interactive monuments that celebrate "freedom of thought and expression", "political involvement" and "inclusivity"[79] taking the place of a public fountain, while I could not even cut leaflets for an antifascist march in my faculty workshops. Oh, the coherence you have taught me.

I won't end my academic path with regrets over what
I could have done differently.

This is just an archive. Learn from it what you want.

I hope one of the lessons is that a free Palestine
means we all are free.

Timeline of events

If the mainstream narration about the 2023-~~2025~~ongoing Palestinian Genocide can start from 7th October 2023,
ignoring what happened, respectively:

- **two days earlier** ("Israelis kill four Palestinians in occupied West Bank confrontations" *Al Jazeera, 5 October 2023*[80]),

- **three days earlier** ("Israeli settlers storm Al-Aqsa Mosque complex on fifth day of Sukkot" *Al Jazeera, 4 October 2023*[81]),

- **the month before** ("In the West Bank, Israeli settlers uprooted and stole 35 olive tree saplings in Haris. Israeli settlers also threw stones at Palestinian vehicles traveling east of Bethlehem. Israeli forces shot and injured 2 Palestinians during a raid in Beit Umar. Israeli forces also raided Qalandia refugee camp, injuring 5 with baton rounds, including 1 who would lose his left eye. Elsewhere, Israeli forces raided Ya'bad, leading to tear-gas related injuries. Israeli forces also damaged and uprooted some 300 olive, grape, and fig trees near Haris. Meanwhile, Israeli forces seized water pipelines in Susiya. 6 Palestinians were arrested during raids in al-'Awja, Qalqilya, Balata refugee camp, and az-Zubaidat. In East Jerusalem, Israel forced 1 Palestinian family to demolish part of their own home in Silwan." *Chronology of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*[82]),

- **the years before** ("2023 marks deadliest year on record for children in the occupied West Bank" *Save the Children report, September 2023*[83])…

…then this timeline can encompass only the months I was formally enrolled in my thesis exam.

> As per "Israel-Hamas war: a timeline"[84]
> Source: Reuters, AP, AFP, Al Jazeera • With inputs from Srivatsan K.C.

July 1, 2025 - Israeli attacks across Gaza, on Palestinians seeking aid, continue. Trump says Israel has agreed to finalise a 60-day ceasefire and calls on Hamas to accept too. Hamas says it is ready for a ceasefire but wants a complete end to the war in Gaza.

July 7 The first session of indirect Hamas-Israel ceasefire talks end inconclusively.

> *Netanyahu is trying to stop the far-right elements in his coalition from toppling the government, which they have vowed to do if Israel stops fighting and enters a deal to release the hostages, by convincing them that he will renew the war at the end of the two-month hiatus*[85].

July 9 U.S. administration sanctions Francesca Albanese, independent investigator probing human rights abuses in Gaza.

July 21 A group of 25 countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, France, and the U.K., issues a joint statement demanding an end to the war in Gaza.

July 25 Trump accuses Hamas of not wanting a ceasefire in Gaza. Israel says it will explore other options to bring home the hostages.

July 28 Israeli military begins limited pauses of 10 hours a day in fighting in three areas in Gaza to enable flow of aid.

Aug. 7 Netanyahu says Israel wants to take full control of Gaza but does not want to keep or govern it, in an interview to Fox News.

Aug. 8 Israeli Cabinet approves Netanyahu's plan to take over Gaza, escalation of war. World leaders raise alarm on Israel's decision. Thousands protest in Tel Aviv, Israel, against the decision.

Aug. 19 Hamas says it agrees to new truce plans in Gaza, after receiving the plan from Qatar, Egypt, and backed by the U.S.

Sep. 9 Israel targets Hamas leaders in Qatari capital Doha as explosions rock the city. Qatar condemns the attack and calls it cowardly.

Sep. 16 Israeli military says expanded operation to destroy Hamas's military infrastructure in Gaza City has begun and warns all residents to move south.

Sep. 21 U.K., Canada, and Australia formally recognise Palestine.

Sep. 22 France formally recognises Palestine.

Sep. 25 Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, speaks over video to the UNGA, rejects the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, and says the militant group will have no role in governing Gaza after the war.

Sep. 26 Netanyahu slams European leaders for recognising Palestine and vows to finish the job against Hamas, in his speech at the U.N. Delegates of several countries walk out during his speech in protest.

Sep. 30 US President Donald Trump unveils a 20-point peace plan to end the Gaza war, backed by Israeli PM Netanyahu, proposing a technocratic government, amnesty for Hamas members, and international oversight. Death toll in Palestine goes over 66,000, according to the Health Ministry.

Oct. 3 Trump says he believes Hamas is ready for peace and asks Israel to stop bombing Gaza, after Hamas agrees to free hostages and enter negotiations.

Oct. 4 Trump says Israel has agreed to an initial withdrawal line in Gaza and says Hamas's acceptance of his proposal would immediately trigger the ceasefire.

Oct. 7 On the day of two years of the war in Gaza, Hamas and Israel open indirect talks in Egypt under Mr. Trump's peace plan. Pro-Palestinian protestors stage demonstrations in various countries for two years of the war.

Oct. 8 Israel and Hamas agree to the first phase of the peace plan to pause fighting and release some hostages, Trump says.

Oct. 10 Israeli Cabinet approves outline of hostage release deal by Hamas. Israeli military says its forces have withdrawn to the agreed deployment lines, according to the first stage of the ceasefire.

Oct. 13 Hamas hands over seven hostages to Red Cross. The war has ended, declares Trump.

Oct. 18 Since the ceasefire, Israel has already violated it 47 times [86]

Oct. 26 Since the ceasefire, Israel has violently killed 93 Palestinians, and wounded 324 more [87]

Nov. 11 Since the ceasefire, IOF have killed 241 Palestinians and injured 619 people, in at least 194 instances of unilateral violations of the truce.

Thanks and acknowledgements

I want to thank all the people that have helped me reach this moment.
It will be a long list.

Inizio con i miei genitori, che non ci siamo annoiati mai: grazie per l'attesa. Mi siete di esempio in modi belli che non sospettate. Anna, bruv, 谢谢。Starti dietro è impossibile ma provarci tenendoti d'occhio da lontano mi riempie sempre di gioia. Thanko fo tha edits. And for all the fish-*erm*-man hats.

Ai miei amici molto amici raccolti attraverso circa quindici vite: I took definitely the long way and you were there for me. I won't forget.

Nicla, guarda! dopo dodici anni non sono più un Gionsnò! Ora potremo andare per le montagne e per il mondo. Guido, mese prossimo tocca di nuovo a te, e poi potremo andare per osterie. E per il mondo? Annalisa, professoressa per qualche anno, amica attraverso tutti gli altri: ogni tanto la vita pare un romanzo, per fortuna che sappiamo riconoscere quando è scritta bene e quando è meglio girare pagina.

Who knows if I would have passed AB's exam if not for Sara... dalla punta dei capelli alla punta dei piedi, grazie. Prima o poi non avremo più nulla da raccontarci e ce ne faremo succedere altre. A Diana, divinità maggiore del mettersi in cima alle proprie priorità nel mio pantheon privato, dico che What Would Diana Do? è una delle cose più sane che mi sono chiesta in questi mesi e anni. Roberta! Ai gazpacho alla vodka alle borse ai progetti inconclusi alle risate e alle sette stacco, poi vado da Sergio: se non era per te... Greta - ci vuole forza e coraggio e ogni giorno mi fai vedere come si fa, anche se te sei convinta che sia all'inverso: è un piacere crescere insieme. Matteo, grazie per il B2, ma soprattutto per i mesi sereni insieme. I cambiamenti in meglio valgono moltissimo in una vita bufa come la mia. Ivan, vicina di casa specialissima, tra Barbie e balli e insulti alle infradito riesci anche ad essere simpatico. Kathrin, hai visto il potenziale in una centoventuhrista bizzarra e da lì sono conseguite molte cose. Sono in debito. Uwe, Stephan... i migliori quasicolleghi di sempre. A presto! Anna, er biji! ...e ci siamo capite. Katharina, it's finally gonna be ceramics time. See you soon! Cedar, Mara, let's go live in the woods. Matteo, Matthias, Filippo; pochino (bisogna rimediare) ma buonissimi. Robert, Vitalii, Valentina... grazie per l'aiuto. Spero potrò ricambiare.

To all professors and staff who helped me during this seven year long experience, from Ralf and Audrey onwards: thank you. Without all of you, Raffaella, Rossella, Elena, Sacha, Ines; Albert, Markus F, Valentin, Matthias, Christian, Daniel, Nico, Eva, Alex, Serena, Markus K, Luca... I wouldn't have managed to get here. You will always be paid too little for the amount of help you gift to students. Curzio, sarò sempre riconoscente per gli yogurt e le lezioni.

Grazie a tutte le persone che erano in piazza Municipio la sera del 3 ottobre, e a chi avrebbe voluto esserci. A ricordarmi che esistono mille universi che si sforzano per un mondo migliore, un po' del peso della vita si fa più lieve.

To Sabrin and Leena, to all Palestinian women: one day you will sing of joy in your land and I will be there to listen to your triumph.

And many thanks to you, prof. Marc. You did exceed any expectations I didn't know I could have had.

Thanks to modern medicine and all modern sciences; thanks to old wisdom and wonky comfort beliefs.

I'm here because we all are.

Let's act like we care.

A Emma Bortolin:
ora che ho finito e che tu non hai più
bisogno di una nipote medico,
mi prenderò cura di tutti gli altri.

A Giulia Zannini -
che spero approvi o almeno
sospenda il giudizio fino alla fine.

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